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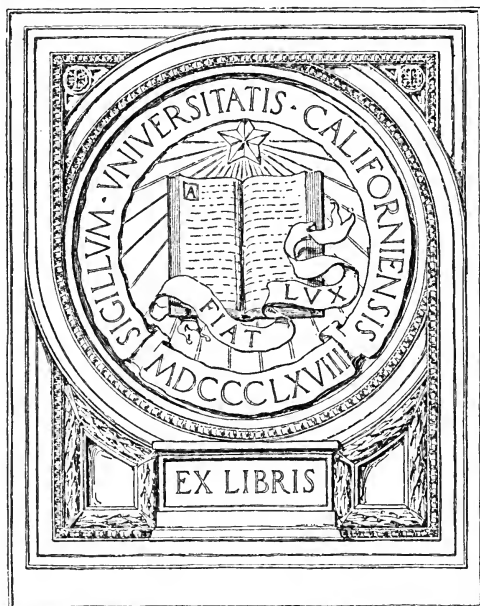
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**A Brief Survey**  
of  
**Housing Conditions in Bridgeport,**  
**Connecticut.**

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**Investigation and Report**  
by  
**Udetta D. Brown,**  
for the  
**Bridgeport Housing Association**

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**March-May, 1914.**

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TO THE  
HONORABLE

## THANK YOU.

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Without the assistance of the City Officials of Bridgeport much of the material used in this Report would have been inaccessible. Thanks are due especially to Mr. Rowland and Miss McGrath in the Building Inspector's office, to Mr. Terry, the City Engineer, and to Mr. Gordon, Superintendent of Charities. Through the kindness of Mr. Ives the material in the Health Department was placed at my service.

The members of the Executive Committee of the Bridgeport Housing Association and the General Secretary, Mr. Myers, responded most cordially to every call upon their time or experience.

The data concerning the source of water supply and facilities for distribution were obtained from the Officials of the Hydraulic Company.

The insurance maps of the city were repeatedly put at my disposal through the kindness of Mr. Broderick

Mr. Ihlder, Field Secretary of the National Housing Association, visited Bridgeport during the investigation. He also gave helpful suggestions and criticisms on the final report.

To these and all the others who helped in the preparation of this report, I take this opportunity of saying "Thank you."

UDETТА D. BROWN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

In early Colonial times, the place where Bridgeport now is, was set aside as an Indian reservation between the towns of Fairfield and Stratford. It was known as the Golden Hill Reservation, a name which still persists in the city in Golden Hill Street. The site of the reservation was too well located on the shore of Long Island Sound to remain secure from the white man's encroachments. Gradually he pushed his way towards the port and built his home on the hill. This hill is not far from the centre of the city, and was until recent years, the finest residence section. Here were large, comfortable homes with spacious lawns and gardens, high above the busy Main Street of the thriving New England city. Many of the old houses still stand, but most of the gardens have been curtailed by the building of new houses, and additional streets have been cut through the wide lawns.

Like many industrial cities the population of Bridgeport is largely foreign. Of a population of 102,054 the census report shows less than 27% of the white people to be native born of native parents. More than 35% are foreign born, and a slightly larger proportion native born of foreign or mixed parentage. To hear the conversation in trolley cars or on the streets one would think the builders of the Tower of Babel had been let loose in the city of Bridgeport so diversified are the tongues spoken. Nearly seven thousand Hungarians, cleanly, thrifty, but somewhat stolid make up about 20% of this foreign born element. Ireland and Italy each contribute more than five thousand; Russia more than four thousand; Austria and England each more than three thousand; Germany, Sweden, Syria, Poland and many other countries

add to this polyglot population. Fortunately these races are not completely isolated one from the other in various sections of the city, although one race frequently predominates. One woman summed up the situation on the West side by saying "I speak Hungarian, German and ——O! you have to speak a little of everything if you live down here."

Connecticut was originally a farming state, but in many parts the land was not well suited to this industry. The Yankee pieced out his income from the farm by some home industry which could be carried on during the winter months when the farm work was slack. From these small home manufactories grew the huge industrial activities of the present day.

The rapid growth of Bridgeport (43.7% in ten years) is due largely to its industrial development which has been fostered by the location of the city on the main line of the chief railroad of New England. The factories are of many kinds, including those making automobiles, corsets, small metal products of various kinds and sewing machines. With such a variety of industries, there is, of course, great diversity in the skill of the workmen employed, making it imperative that the skilled and the unskilled man shall be able to obtain decent homes in or near the city.

A survey of the living conditions in Bridgeport was undertaken by the Bridgeport Housing Association in order to find out what conditions obtained in the city, and with the expectation that a definite constructive program could be based on the report.

Such a survey is made by selecting districts for intensive study much as an expert makes borings to determine the value of a mine and the best method of working it. The choice of districts in Bridgeport was governed partly by predominating race elements, and partly by type of dwellings and somewhat by the amount of rent paid.

In addition to these intensive investigations, a study was made of tendencies and building habits in the city. The material used was that obtained in these intensive inspections, in

more general inspections in many parts of the city, official records and census reports. The general investigations revealed a number of courts, narrow streets, and lanes, many of which, though open to the public, are regarded as private ways. A special study was made of a number of these thoroughfares.

### **Terms defined :**

For the purpose of this survey the following words are used as defined below :

1. A tenement house is any house or building or portion thereof, which is rented, leased, let, or hired out, to be occupied, or is arranged or designed to be occupied, or is occupied as the home or residence of three families or more, living independently of each other, and doing their cooking upon the premises, and having a common right in the halls, stairways, or yards.

2. A two-family house is a house shared by two families, usually one family on each floor, and includes both two-family flats and apartments above stores, if arranged for two families only. It does not include semi-detached houses, each occupied by a single family.

3. The semi-detached house ("double house" or "half house") is one of two complete houses except that one wall is common to both houses. In such a house there is a cellar, water supply and yard entirely separate and distinct from every other house, although there may be no dividing fence in the yard.

4. A cellar is a story more than one-half below the level of the grade.

5. A basement is a story partly, but not more than one-half, below the level of the grade.

6. In the tables, "?" includes any house or portion thereof about which there is any uncertainty or which does not come under the definite classifications.

Definitions 1, 4 and 5 are those in the State Tenement House Act.

The following are better definitions which should be used in legislation hereafter enacted.

1. A Tenement House is any house or building which is occupied, in whole or in part, as the home or residence of two families or more living independently of each other and doing their cooking upon the premises, and includes apartment houses and flat houses and all other houses similarly occupied, by whatever name known.

4. A cellar is a story having more than one-half of its height below the curb level, or below the highest level of the adjoining ground.

5. A basement is a story partly underground but having at least one-half of its height above the curb level, and also one-half of its height above the highest level of the adjoining ground.

## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF INVESTIGATION.

Three districts were selected for detailed inspection. The first was in the so-called Hungarian section, south of the railroad and west of Cedar Creek, for convenience called "District A" in the report; the second was in an older section of the city on the east side, south of the railroad between Yellow Mill Pond and the Pequonnock River, called "District B"; the third section was on the west side, lying between Fairfield and North Avenues, Mountain Grove Cemetery, and Park Avenue, called "District C" in the report.

The exact location of the houses visited in each of these districts is in the hands of the committee as are also the record cards and the tabulation sheets. In making these detailed inspections special houses were not selected but every occupied house within a given locality was visited and a record made of it so that the best as well as the worst conditions were included. In only two instances was the investigator refused admission. These houses have been dropped entirely in making the tables but a record card marked "Admission refused" was kept with the other records to show the reason for omitting these houses.

"District A" includes an entire block and the houses opposite one side of the block, making a total of fifty-four houses. Many of the houses here are three story frame tenements, frequently of the semi-detached type. These are treated as two houses if the separation is complete. In general the rooms in the tenement houses are adequately large and the spaces between the buildings wide enough to furnish good light and ventilation. There are also some two-family and a few one-family houses in this district. The worst feature here is the great proportion of tenement houses, of the 232 families provided for, 209 are in tenement houses where it is impossible to develop family life in any true sense. The

hall toilets, which are usually without any outside window, are a constant menace to the health and morals of the tenants. The rear dwellings, most of which are tenement houses, show the beginnings of a slum district.

The majority of the people are Hungarians but there is a leavening of Slavs, Jews and others. Of the public school pupils in this vicinity about 97% are Hungarians. These people seem thrifty and clean. The bare floors are scrubbed until the knots and nails stand out. Frequently a sunny window is full of growing plants, among which may be found some aromatic ones from the "old country."

On a sunshiny day the yards in this part of the city are gay with dancing clothes-lines, weighted down with bed-covers, red and orange pillows peeping through the handmade lace of the pillow slips, and bulging feather beds; while little dresses bob and courtesy in a mad frolic with the breeze.

Just before Easter there was the greatest sort of a house cleaning. The Jews were cleaning up for the Passover according to their ritual, the halls were scrubbed, accumulated rubbish was cleared away, the children were bathed and dressed in their best, even the objecting baby—"he no like holiday"—was given the most thorough bath of his life. Not to be outdone, the Christian women were getting ready for Easter in much the same fashion. Many a barefooted Slav woman had rooms beyond reproach, the kitchen with floor and sink spotless, the stove shiny and black, and beyond, a glimpse of a snowy bed bathed in the afternoon sun.

In "District B" the tenement house is the predominating type of dwelling. Of the 211 families provided for here, 185 are in tenement houses. In general the buildings are older and more irregular in construction than in the west end district. Many of the dwellings have awkward additions; several small frame houses have been raised one story, the new first story being of brick; in one or two instances small houses have been combined in one larger house. Some of the buildings are placed askew on the lots, producing a jumble, which is increased by the many rear houses.

Among these rear houses are many which have seen better days and have been retired to their present location

from better positions. These dwellings usually have inadequate yards, and, where they occur on abutting lots, narrow spaces are made, which restrict light and ventilation.

The tuberculosis record for the side of R— Street, which has rear tenements, is one of the worst in the city; on the other hand, no cases have been reported during 1912 and 1913 from the side of this street where there are no rear dwellings.

In this district, too, were found disease breeding dark rooms. Out-door waterclosets, filthy and lacking decent privacy, still persist in some of the yards.

There are many Italians in this neighborhood, who retain their national customs and prejudices. It is interesting to see in operation the small macaroni factory in one of the yards. The factory is run by machinery and turns out a vast quantity of macaroni in all its various sizes and shapes.

“Districts A and B” are already blighted with tenement houses. As a contrast to them “District C” was included. This “District” is in a section of Bridgeport where small houses predominate and tenement houses are infrequent, of the 48 houses inspected not one was a tenement house. The two-family house is the usual type, but there are many one-family dwellings also. The houses are usually detached, frame cottages, with a bit of green at the front and sides and an ample yard at the rear. The yards are usually fenced and there are many evidences that gardens are not infrequent in the summer. These little houses offer much better opportunities for family life than the larger tenements. One could not but be impressed with the more homelike atmosphere in this neighborhood. The children are under the constant surveillance of their mothers; the chickens confined instead of wandering freely about the yards and streets; ashes and garbage more generally placed in their proper receptacles, here and there small patches of earth dug up in preparation for a kitchen garden. The population here is, if possible, even more varied than elsewhere. One triangular block which provides accommodations for thirty-three families shows ten different nationalities, ranging from the American born through the Irish and English to the Syrians. Several of the houses are



One and two-family houses in "District C."  
Fenced in yards with grass, vines, and shading trees



owned by people living in them, although this is by no means invariably so. The result is that more care is taken in the selection of tenants, but the choice is based on cleanliness, ability to pay rent, and good-neighborliness rather than upon race prejudice. It was in this neighborhood that the investigator was addressed by one of the men first in Italian, then in German, and finally in French which, if not perfect, was at least near enough to the real article to be understood.

The usual rent in "Districts A and B" is \$8.00 or \$9.00 for three rooms with an occasional lower rent for inferior accommodations, or an increase for apartments above the average. In "District C" the rents are usually from \$12.00 to \$18.00 a month. The rate per room per month is about \$3.00 in all districts but "District C" offers nothing smaller than a four room apartment. On the other hand the rent in "District C" includes more privacy, the use of at least half the yard and frequently a bath room. Occasional very low rents are found—such as \$4.00 for the rear rooms upstairs, in a rear tenement, in "District B", but the rooms are in a rickety old house and are occupied by people so unintelligent that in sixteen years they have not acquired enough English even for the every day needs of life.

Because of the depth of many of the lots in the city, there is an unusually large number of short courts, lanes, and narrow streets, many of which, and possibly all of which, have been made by the land owners so as to develop their property more economically. These thoroughfares were investigated with special reference to the paving, lighting, and the type of house on each. There was a great variety. Some of the courts exemplified the excellent conditions which can result from this method of development when carried out wisely and consistently. Such courts are adequately wide for wagons to pass in and out. They are paved and lighted and the houses on them are small enough not to unduly darken the narrow way, and the yards at the rear of the houses are ample for the small dwellings. On the other hand a few of these small thoroughfares are extremely narrow at the entrance, the buildings at the street end forming a sort of neck to the bottle, the rest of the court being the bottle. With no artificial light-



### A Narrow Court

The court is paved and lighted, the yards ample for the excellent one-family houses

ing within such a court it is easy to realize that the degenerate and criminal are likely to seek these hidden ways, so Bridgeport is inviting, even if it has not already developed, the evils that afflict Washington because of its alley dwellings. The entrances to the courts should be wide, the courts without angles or offsets, and lighted, so they may be, in every part, in full view from the main traveled thoroughfare. These minor thoroughfares should be taken over by the City and new ones built upon only when they have been accepted by the City.

For convenience the detailed inspection in the districts will be treated under two classifications—the first will deal with construction and the fire peril, the second with sanitation and maintenance of the dwellings. Under construction and fire peril consideration will be given to the type of buildings, the material of which it is made, the size of the building in proportion to the lot, the type and use of cellar or basement, the lighting of the halls and rooms, and also fire protection. Under maintenance and sanitation will be included the adequacy and convenience of the water supply and toilet accommodations, the type of fixture used, lighting of the toilet compartments, the provision for disposing of ashes and garbage, drainage and cleanliness of the yards and out-buildings.



## CHAPTER III.

### CONSTRUCTION AND FIRE PROTECTION.

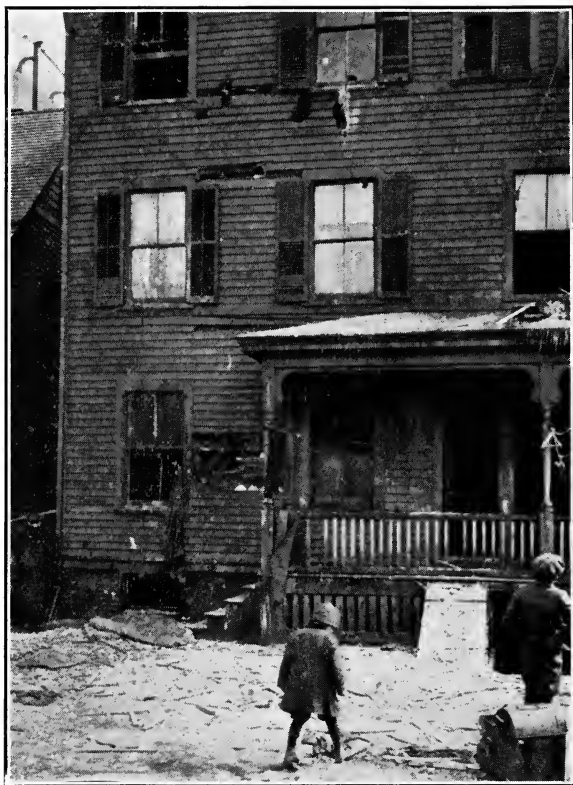
**Material:** The material used in most of the houses inspected and, indeed, throughout the city, is wood. This is highly combustible and increases the fire risk tremendously. In less than six weeks there were two fires in the Hungarian section of the city in one of which three men lost their lives, in the other no lives were lost but the financial loss was considerable. Aside from the great fire risk incident to such a large amount of frame construction, there is a quick deterioration in the buildings unless repairs are made frequently.

**Type of House:** In "Districts A and B" by far the greater number of dwellings are tenement houses, sheltering from three to eight families.

NUMBER OF ONE-FAMILY, TWO-FAMILY, AND TENEMENT HOUSES IN EACH DISTRICT.

	One-family houses	Two-family houses	Tenement houses	?	Total
District A	5	7	40	2	54
" B	9	9	39	1	58
" C	16	32	0	0	48
Total	30	48	79	3	160

Many cities in the East have already burdened themselves with the problems resulting from tenement house life. The apartments are usually too small and cramped to furnish room for home life and home recreation. Children and young people are turned out on the street and into public resorts for all their amusement and social life, imposing upon the city a heavy burden, due to the delinquency and crime sure to result. This burden will be partially lifted by a generous provision of well-managed playgrounds and social centers, but even these will not fully meet the need so created. Playgrounds and



A frame tenement house in which several men lost their  
lives and other lives were endangered by a fire

social centers are designed to supplement the home, not to be substitutes for it. They furnish opportunity for wholesome neighborhood life, but leave unfilled the need for the privacy, the wholesome recreation and the true family life that are possible only in the home. It is not too late for Bridgeport to take decided steps toward securing dwellings for her people that will be homes. The following table compiled from the 1910 census report makes clear the position of Bridgeport as compared with the three other cities next larger and the three next smaller to it in population, in regard to the number of persons per dwelling. It is clear from this that although Bridgeport does not head the list, neither is she the greatest offender in this respect. Her aim should be toward a separate house for each family.

Name of City	Population	No. of Dwellings	No. of Families	Persons per Dwelling	Persons per Family	Families per Dwelling
Trenton, N. J.	96,815	17,932	19,678	5.4	4.9	1.09
Hartford, Conn.	98,915	11,535	21,925	8.6	4.5	1.90
Albany, N. Y.	100,253	15,437	24,069	6.5	4.2	1.55
<b>Bridgeport</b>	<b>102,054</b>	<b>14,934</b>	<b>21,689</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>1.45</b>
Cambridge, Mass.	104,839	14,577	22,765	7.2	4.6	1.56
Lowell, Mass.	106,294	15,056	21,932	7.1	4.8	1.45
Nashville, Tenn.	110,364	22,118	26,077	5.0	4.2	1.17

In many respects the tenement houses of Bridgeport are much better than those many other cities are erecting. The spaces between the buildings are usually ample for the rooms depending upon them for light and ventilation. The yards at the rear are usually large; the windows at the front and rear together with the windows at the sides permit of cross ventilation. The rooms themselves are large, occasionally too large to be thoroughly lighted by the windows. Furthermore, these large rooms are a temptation to take numerous boarders. Two or three large beds and one or two small ones can be fitted into some of these rooms and each bed is filled at night.

There are elsewhere in the city rows of brick tenement houses, with interior rooms. The present State law prohibits the further erection of such buildings, and provides that windows be cut from the dark rooms already in existence to ad-

joining light rooms. No one will question the necessity of prohibiting dark rooms the value of light and air is so well known at the present time; but the danger of the sanitary tenement is more difficult to combat because it is more subtle and elusive. There are records that show an appalling amount of tuberculosis in unsanitary dwellings, but the breaking down of family life; the atrophy of the sense of individual responsibility, the whole gamut of **moral** ills which result from tenement house life, even at its best, are more difficult to measure, but no less real than the physical ills which are bred in darkness and filth.

In "District C" the two-family house is the predominating type. Such houses are far superior to tenement dwellings, though lacking some of the advantages of the one-family house. These two-family houses frequently have yards which are fenced in, where the occupants have their own gardens and where children play, protected from the dangers of the street playground. One woman was unstinted in her praise of the Hungarian living in the house with her. All summer long, she said the front yard was a mass of beautiful flowers, which were cared for with patient devotion.

One-third of the dwellings in this District are of the one-family type, either surrounded by a yard or semi-detached. It is frequently asserted that people who live in tenements prefer them. But the testimony of many is to the contrary. Even when the burden of paying for a house rests heavily there is rejoicing at the seclusion offered by the separate dwellings. One woman who rented a six room cottage for \$18.00 said the "Privacy was worth the money." Several tenement dwellers felt that such shelter was only a make-shift until they were able to do better. Frequently the cottages had been occupied by the same people for six years or more. There is here a continuity in the family life, usually accompanied by a stability of occupation, which breeds content and prosperity which is foreign to the more volatile life of the tenements.

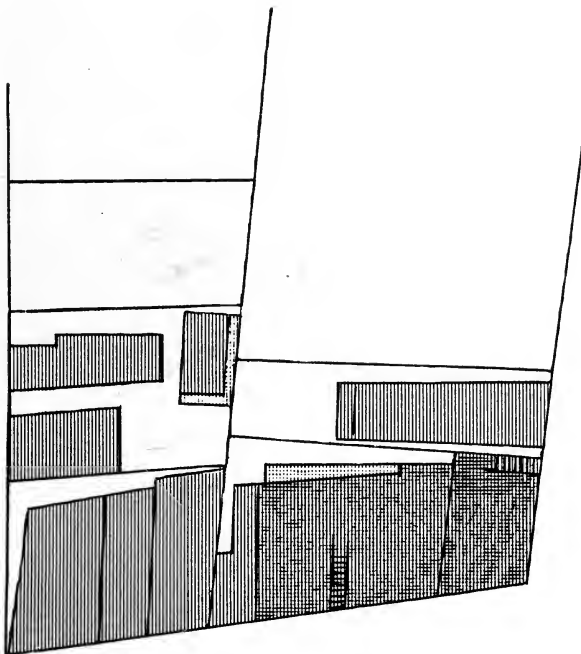
A detached house of six rooms, the type most frequently seen in the inspections, is larger than many families need and commands a rent (\$18.00) which is often beyond the reach of the factory worker. Semi-detached cottages of four or even



three rooms, renting at the same rate (\$3.00 per room per month) would be as well within the reach of all as an apartment in a two-family house or sanitary tenement and would make a much better home.

**Yards and Courts:** The yards at the rear of the front houses are usually ample and often so large that a narrow street cut lengthwise through the block would be an economic advantage, if built upon with due restrictions. Where these deep lots have been utilized for the erection of rear houses all too frequently the additional house is a tenement, so large that it of necessity overcrowds the yard space. There are instances where the space between the rear house and the rear fence is insufficient even for a passage way. Where two rear dwellings are built on abutting lots, ventilation and light are nearly always obstructed and the fire risk is greatly augmented.

In strong contrast to the many ample yards are instances of buildings so constructed and so crowded together that there is little or no yard space.





Buildings so crowded together that there is  
little or no yard space

In "District B" there is a corner lot with only a tiny wedge-shaped yard and this does not extend to the street. The result is that there are dark rooms and any escape from one of the houses in case of fire is restricted to the roof and the one entrance to the street. The stairs to this entrance are of wood and there are only wooden doors separating the apartments from the public hall. Fire flaming up on the stairs would cut off escape by roof or entrance, forcing the people to the windows where there are no fire escapes, though possibly they could reach the wooden porch of the adjacent house. Here and there other cases were noted where the yards between front and rear tenements are so small that they are practically always in shadow from the adjacent buildings. In such yards the spring was well advanced before the winter's collection of snow was melted away and the frost thoroughly out of the ground.

It is gratifying to find that the courts or sideyards are frequently wider than the minimum requirement for tenements. In several instances where new tenements are being erected measurements were made and these courts measured nearly double the width required by law. A comparison of the light in the rooms on these courts with the light in rooms where the court was down to the minimum, confirmed the opinion held by many familiar with the State Code that the width of the side courts as prescribed in that statute is not sufficient. The many instances where wider courts are being left are proof that Bridgeport does not believe the small court a necessity. Legislation setting a more nearly adequate standard will save Bridgeport from dwelling rooms which are not amply lighted.

**Light and Ventilation:** Dark rooms result from two causes. The first is the house with interior rooms so arranged that they cannot have windows cut directly to the outer air. No such rooms were found in either "Districts A" or "C". In "District B" there are five houses having rooms without windows directly to the outer air. The first building in which I met with this condition was a brick tenement occupied by seven families. In the first apartment a sick baby fretted in its cradle; the rapid breathing seeming to foretell



Children playing in a badly drained yard between a front  
and a rear tenement house

the beginning of pneumonia. In another room a little girl some six years of age crouched against the wall. Shawls hung across the windows darkened the sun shining into the kitchen. The mother explained that the little girl had sore eyes. On inspection it was found that the apartment consisted of the sunny kitchen, a dark bedroom, and a living room with windows toward the east. In yet another apartment a pale-faced, anaemic small boy was wandering listlessly about with his head wrapped up, the explanation being that he was ill. My inspection of other dwellings had revealed almost no illness up to this time. How much were the dark rooms responsible for the poor health of these children? It must be remembered that the effect of lack of sunlight and fresh air is frequently a general debility which predisposes people to disease, rather than specific diseases, such as tuberculosis, due to lack of sunlight.

Some of the dark rooms found in this district are the result of dividing larger rooms. This is especially true where there are small shops in the front of a building which originally had a single room at the rear. This room is used as a kitchen and a partition divides the rear of the store from the front, making a bed-room, if the space thus provided can be dignified by the name of room. In most instances it is hardly more than space enough for a couple of beds with a passageway between them from kitchen to store, with no provision for privacy either for the family or individual.

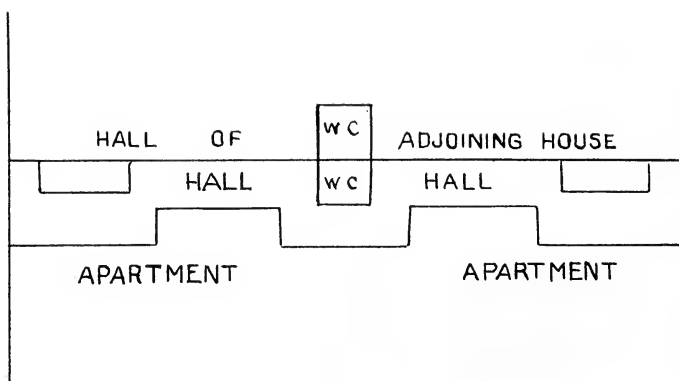
A second cause of dark rooms is the erection of buildings so close together that the spaces between are insufficient to furnish light and ventilation. Usually the first of such buildings was, when erected, well supplied with light and air "borrowed" from neighboring lots. When these lots are built upon, narrow spaces only are left between the buildings. There are not many such found in the districts inspected but there are occasional instances of this defect. One of the worst offenders in this respect is the building already referred to as having dark rooms. Not content with making interior rooms, the building is so placed on the lot that some of the rooms have practically no yard space behind them and when the adjoining lot was developed the light was cut off. There are

also tenement houses in "District A" where the spaces between the buildings are short of what is now required under the State law. It is impracticable to remedy this defect but it should be prevented absolutely in the future. These narrow ways are frequently made worse by the eaves projecting unnecessarily beyond the side of the house. This is a building device which is perhaps carried to its extreme in two-family houses now building in the northern end of Bridgeport. At times undoubtedly the appearance of a house is improved by eaves projecting beyond the side walls. With a peaked or slanting roof such eaves protect the sides of the house from rain and snow, but it is possible to construct houses with roofs slanting so that they drain at the rear, when practically no side eaves are necessary. Such a construction should be strongly favored by those building dwellings with only the minimum space at the sides. The use of exaggerated eaves which always darken the windows to some extent can be tolerated only where there are wide yards at the rear and sides of the dwellings.

The lighting of the halls in tenements has frequently been one of the most difficult problems to solve. The practice in Bridgeport in the past has usually been to construct the tenements with the halls running through from front to rear with a stairway in front and another at the rear, either inside or outside of the house. Such an arrangement admits of thorough ventilation and with windows at the ends of the halls or glass set in the doors, the halls are fairly well lighted. There are some exceptions to this good practice, such as hallways lighted only by small panes set in the doors to bedrooms and these panes usually curtained in order to secure privacy. Such halls are usually dirty and have accumulations of old clothes and broken crockery in the corners. One very bad hall plan was found in "District A." This hall was intercepted midway by the toilet compartment and was rendered even more irregular by projections from the front and rear apartments.



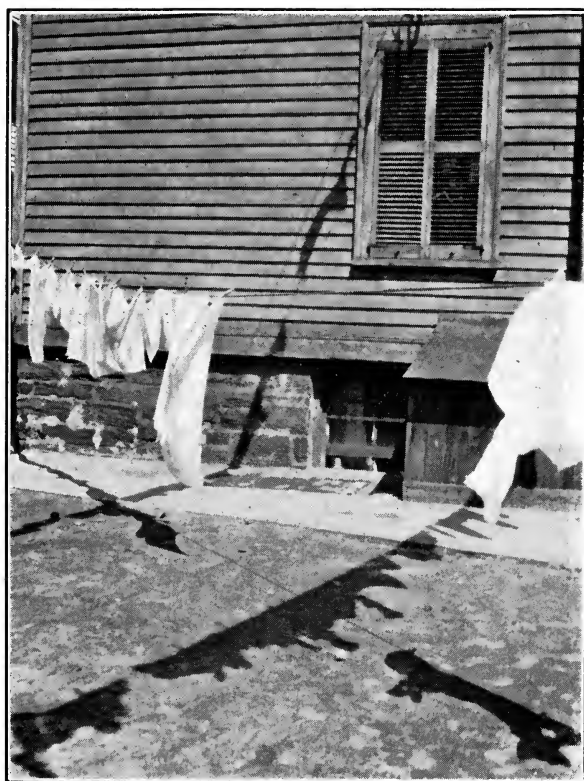
Three story frame tenement houses. Distance between the buildings is 14 feet. The state law permits 10 foot spaces, 5 feet for each three story tenement house. These houses face south.  
Time 2.15 P. M.



The lighting of halls at night is required by law. The absence of both gas and electricity in many houses makes the problem difficult. But the best kept up tenements are provided with shelves and lamps for night use. This practice is attended with some danger from fire but minimizes the moral dangers of the unlighted public hall.

**Cellars and Basements:** The tenement houses of Bridgeport are peculiarly open to criticism because of the use of cellars and basements as dwellings. Such dwellings have been found in rear tenements with windows almost level with the swampy yard and shadowed by surrounding buildings and fences. It is hardly possible that such dwellings can be dry enough to make a suitable dwelling for any one. Small windows aggravate the unfavorable conditions. Rheumatism, tuberculosis, and other ills fostered by the damp conditions result in enfeebled men and women, who become a burden on the community. "District B" had eleven houses containing seventeen apartments with floors well below grade. Similar dwellings may be seen on many streets of the city. It cannot be strongly enough emphasized that no new buildings should be erected with living rooms below the grade. If there are cellars we should insist upon their being water-proof, light, and well ventilated. Otherwise the house should be lifted a foot and a half or two feet above the surface of the ground to permit of ventilation under the lowest floor. The time has





### Cellar Dwelling

Note the small window which, even on a sunny day,  
is shaded by the house

passed when we can plead ignorance in regard to the effect of damp and musty cellars and basements upon the occupants of a house.

**Fire Protection:** The question of fire protection and sufficient means of egress from a building in case of fire is a very important one. We hear repeatedly of the huge yearly loss from fire in America as compared with European countries. There seems to be a sort of old-fashioned feeling that a fire is a visitation of Providence which should be accepted with little or no murmur, instead of the saner view that a fire is an evidence of carelessness or even of crime, and that loss of life in a fire is an indictment of the whole community. Every year scores of three-story double frame tenements are being erected in the larger New England cities. Bridgeport is no exception to this tendency in construction. Fortunately the Fire Department, and weather conditions not favorable to a rapid spread of fire have so far saved the city from any large conflagration.

The question of fire-escapes is one which demands attention. Even on the brick buildings which are included in this survey no iron fire-escapes were found, although there are brick tenement houses in other districts so equipped. The most nearly adequate provision for leaving the buildings and safeguarding the tenants were in those buildings which provide a front stairway and a rear stairway outside. This gives two distinct means of leaving the building. But there is usually no means of cutting off the fire from any part of the very inflammable stairway and halls. The make-shift arrangement of two inside stairways which practically meet on the second and third floor halls offers little improvement over a single stairway. Possibly the conditions are even made worse by the increased facility for the drafts spreading the flames through the house.

There were some houses found in which there is no inside stairway or at best a stairway which reaches only from the second to the third floor. The single outside stairway is depended upon to reach the second floor. These stairways usually are at the sides or rear of the buildings. While limiting the means of leaving the various apartments, this arrange-



### Fire in the West End

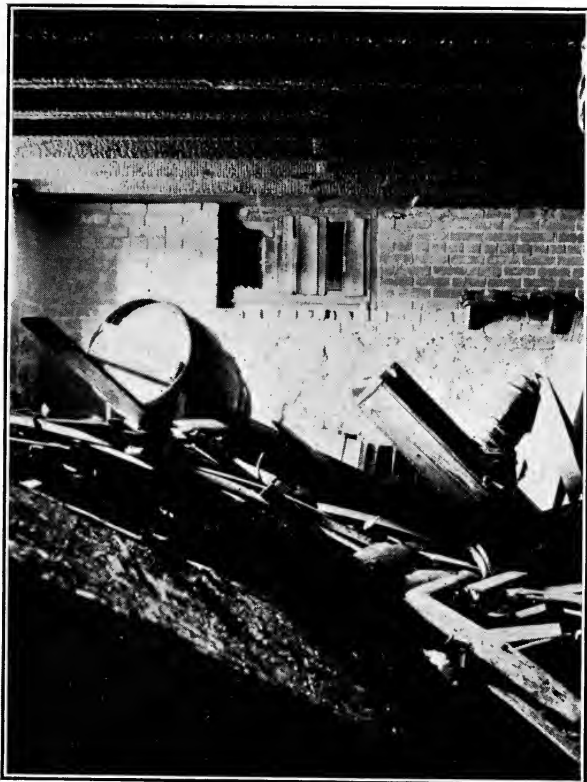
The narrow spaces between the buildings hampered  
the firemen and increased the danger of  
the fire spreading

ment does away with the stair-well which so frequently has proved the weak point when fire has once made headway in a building. But it does not seem possible that such buildings can be as conveniently handled by the firemen as they would be if a stairway were provided leading directly to the street at the front of the house.

The accumulations of rubbish in the cellars and yards (for which there is no excuse) are a source of danger to the buildings. In some instances the cellar is crowded with junk, so that any attempt of a fireman to reach the flames would be greatly hampered. Accumulations of rags and paper in the yard could be ignited by flying sparks and would then be driven about by even a moderate wind, threatening the sheds and flimsy outbuildings which offer an ever ready supply of kindlings if the yard rubbish were once aflame.

The fire danger is increased in many of the tenements by the fact that the dividing walls do not extend from the cellar to the roof and from the front to the rear wall of the house, so forming two independent dwellings. Instead the rear walls are often thrown together or doorways cut through the dividing wall for convenience in getting from one house to the other, or the brick division in the cellar does not extend the full depth of the dwelling. The present regulations require this wall to be without a break.

Added to the extremely inflammable character of the material used in the majority of the dwellings, to the accumulations of rubbish in cellars and yards, and to the lack of slow burning party walls, the situation is further complicated by infrequent hydrants. During the course of the investigations there was a fire on Spruce Street between Hancock and Bostwick Avenues. In order to obtain sufficient water to fight the blaze, engines were stationed well down Spruce Street toward Howard Avenue. Had the firemen failed to confine the fire to the original building and the outer walls of adjacent houses, it would have been necessary to pump water an even greater distance.



Inflammable material in the cellar of a tenement house.  
Boxes, barrels and boards stacked up like kindlings  
as they proved to be. Fire broke out in the  
house early one morning, originating  
probably, in the cellar



## CHAPTER IV.

### SANITATION AND MAINTENANCE.

**Water Supply:** Bridgeport is most fortunate in having a plentiful and excellent water supply. Herring & Freeman state that of the 136 largest cities in this country Bridgeport ranks third in mortality from typhoid. The low death rate from typhoid should prove a city asset. The water supply is drawn from various rivers, lakes and springs, and is stored in several large reservoirs. The supply is kept from contamination by the fact that the country drained is sparsely settled and is policed by overseers of the Hydraulic Company. The water is subjected to the purifying influence of sunshine as it flows into the storage basins.

The method of charging for water service is of vital concern to every community. Cleanliness and health are largely dependent upon an ample and convenient supply of good water. Some method of a flat rate has advantages for both the tenant and the community. The method in Bridgeport is a flat rate for fixtures with a lesser rate for additional fixtures for the same family or for several families using the same fixtures. In this way the dangers resulting from a metered supply are avoided. If a meter is installed there is always a temptation for the one paying the water bill to lessen or entirely cut off the supply so as to save expense. The results are that apartments become dirty and the fixtures most unsanitary. In one city where the landlord could choose between a flat rate or a meter, it was found that occasionally the owner paid the flat rate on his own dwelling but evidently cut off the supply in the nearby houses which he owned and which were furnished with meters, telling the tenants to come to his house for all the water they wished and to use his closet, which was a yard structure. In this way he put the tenants at a great disadvantage, some of them having to carry water more than a hundred feet, but he practically furnished three or four houses at the expense of one.

Hardly less important than the source and adequacy of the water supply, is the location of the faucets. A convenient sink with running water usually results in a clean home and well-washed children. Certainly the contrary is true. If a woman is forced to carry all the water used by her family up a steep flight of stairs, and a distance of fifty or sixty feet, there is a strong temptation to slight the scrubbing and washing processes. Bridgeport is indeed fortunate in having practically every apartment supplied with its individual sink with a good flow of water. Compared with other cities this is a most satisfactory record. But the sinks themselves are frequently old and almost invariably inclosed with woodwork. There is no reason why the sinks should be replaced except where they are actually worn out, but the woodwork should be removed so as to admit light and air where now are dark and often dirty, vermin infected closets. Under present circumstances, the dark, unventilated cubby-hole is used for the storage of cleaning cloths, kerosene, and other articles; not infrequently a small pail of garbage; and occasionally a pile of ashes which is so caked together that it has evidently been in the same place for many weeks, indeed was probably inherited by the present occupants of the apartment. Just how bad these enclosed sinks can become was well illustrated in an old rear tenement. The owner of the building was asked to open the door under the sink so that the pipes could be inspected. When he did so a thousand and one water bugs swarmed out from the rotten water-soaked woodwork. He, of course, was horrified, and murmured something about pouring hot water over the vermin. The children were much interested.

NUMBER OF HOUSES IN EACH DISTRICT HAVING SINKS WITH PLUMBING AS FOLLOWS:

	Plumbing Enclosed	Plumbing Open	Mixed	?	Total
District A	25	22	5	2	54
“ B	29	21	8		58
“ C	30	18	0		48
Total	84	61	13		160



Bath-tubs are not found often in the tenement houses, but in the one and two-family houses in all the districts, and especially in "District C" nearly every apartment had a tub—usually of the old-fashioned sheet-iron type. It is said that outside of the cheapest tenements no one in Bridgeport will accept a house without a bath. This preference is even carried so far that bath-tubs are sometimes found where there are no wash-tubs.

**Toilets:** One of the most vital problems in the housing situation is the adequacy of toilet accommodations. In this respect again Bridgeport is well above many cities in the country. In comparatively few instances were toilets found which serve more than two families, and in more than half the houses there are separate accommodations for each family. As the accompanying table shows, the worst conditions are in the tenement districts.

NUMBER OF HOUSES IN EACH DISTRICT CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO RATIO OF FAMILIES TO TOILETS APPURTENANT TO EACH HOUSE.

	Not more than one family	More than one Not more than two	More than two	?	Total
District A	21	27	6	0	54
" B	20	19	16	3	58
" C	44	3	0	1	48
Total	85	49	22	4	160

Unfortunately many of the compartments are located in the halls so that they are not as convenient as they would be if placed within the apartment. The result of this inconvenience is the almost universal dependence on portable receptacles for use in the rooms even during the day. The practice of depending on such receptacles breeds in the children a lack of personal decency which is much to be regretted. Nor does there seem any excuse for placing the closets in the hall. Frequently the space utilized is taken from the rooms and if the doorway were placed in the apartment instead of in the hall the desired family privacy could be obtained.

These hall compartments are objectionable on another account as they lack proper ventilation and are almost invariably dark, although there are sufficient instances of hall closets

placed so as to be lighted by windows at the rear of the house, to show that the tenants of the usual square box tenement need not bear the additional burden of unlighted toilets.

NUMBER OF HOUSES IN EACH DISTRICT SERVED BY TOILETS HAVING ADEQUATE WINDOWS OR NOT.

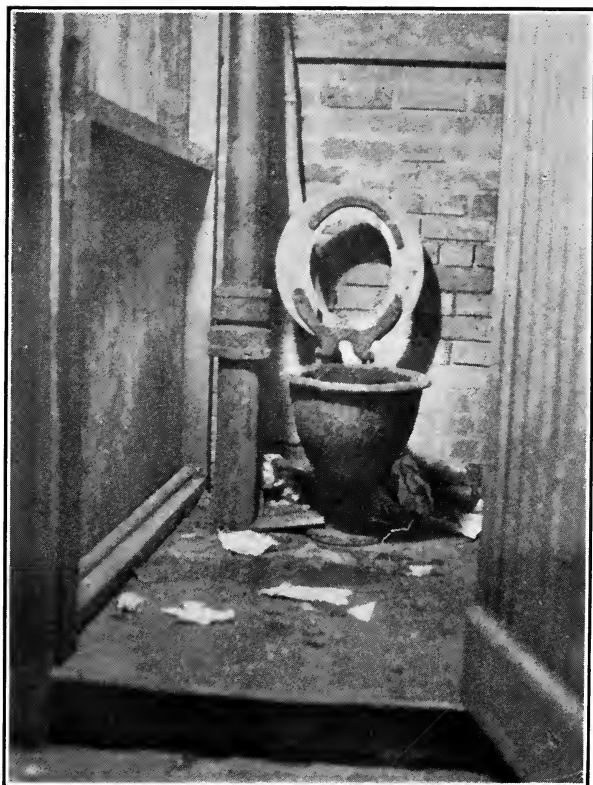
	Having window to street, yard or court	Having no window to street, yard or court	?	Yard toilets only	Total
District A	11	38	5	0	54
“ B	15	18	*19	6	58
“ C	45	2	0	1	48
Total	71	58	24	7	160

\* This number is largely due to porch and entry closets, which received some light from transoms, or glass panels.

The small shaft which is permitted under the present tenement house law is inadequate for lighting these toilets, especially on the lower stories of the dwelling houses. They do improve the ventilation somewhat, but only to a very limited extent.

At night practically all the toilet compartments in “Districts A and B” are without lights except as candles or lamps are carried into them. The practice of relying on movable lights in these frame buildings is exceedingly dangerous. The filthy condition of many of the fixtures when inspected in the morning is conclusive evidence that artificial lighting is necessary to insure cleanliness. Repeated drippings from the fixtures have so saturated the wooden floors that it is now impossible to make the compartments odorless. Nor can we overlook the moral danger attending the use of these dark compartments, especially if they serve several families.

In marked contrast to the obsolete enclosed sinks are the good toilet fixtures. There are still extant a number of short hopper closets, but the wash-out and still more the excellent wash-down type is usual and wherever old closets were being replaced, one of modern type was invariably installed. A few yard closets were found and one or two privies, but the house water-closet is almost universal where sewer connections are possible, and frequently where cesspools must be relied upon. City departments and the water company have brought pres-



Flash light picture of a yard closet. The closet is open to the patrons of a saloon and a dance hall, although it is the only accommodation for one family

sure to bear to secure this desirable state of affairs. At the present time the water company has the following regulation: "No water-closet may be connected with the water supply unless it is placed inside of a building with other water fixture."

The yard closets which were found, though few in number, present most of the bad features of such accommodations. In one yard, three fixtures served two houses—ten families—and a barber shop. Strenuous efforts were made to keep the closets clean and the doors were locked to prevent the promiscuous use of the fixtures. In another instance a yard closet which was the only convenience for one family was open to the use of the patrons of a saloon and a dance hall; in addition the surrounding buildings so shadowed the closet that a flashlight was necessary in taking a picture of it. The privy, which was still in use in "District C", though clean, was over-full and a nuisance to the neighborhood. There is as little excuse for this privy as for the yard water-closets found, since sewers are in the streets in these districts.

In a few instances the only toilet accommodations were in a neighboring house. Such accommodations may be sanitary, well lighted and modern, but by no stretch of the imagination can they be called convenient. They and the yard toilet alike are not fit arrangements for any family, where water-closets in the apartments are possible. No one is responsible for the condition of cleanliness and repair of the fixtures, they are semi-public in character and so tend to destroy those personal habits of decency which safeguard morality. The inconvenience of having no easily accessible toilet is increased when there are babies and toddlers in the family.

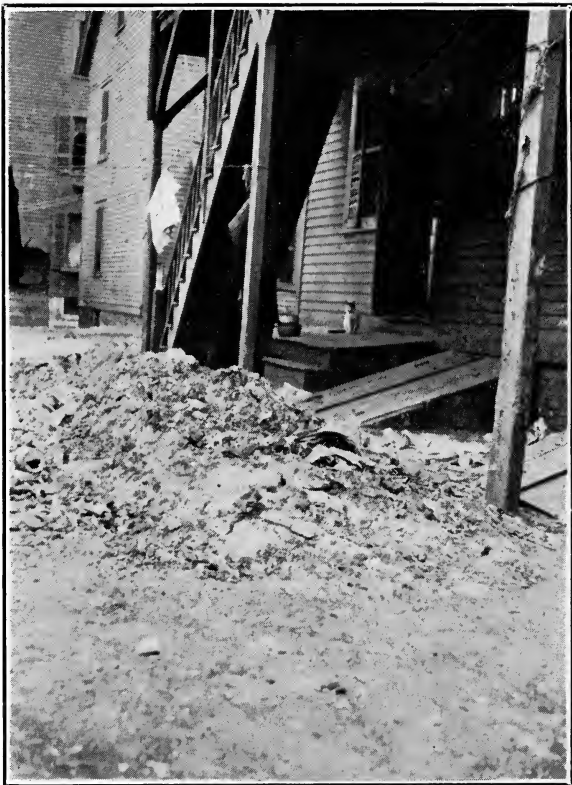
Nothing short of a sanitary toilet in a well lighted compartment, directly accessible from each apartment and for the use of one family only, should content the City of Bridgeport, which has already the necessary water supply and the habit of installing excellent fixtures.

**Sewers:** The proper disposal of sewerage necessitates modern toilet fixtures, but these alone are not sufficient. Sewers ample in size and serving the entire community must be provided. It is at this point that Bridgeport fails to meet the responsibilities of a large and rapidly growing American

city. The mileage of sewers in the city is less than two-thirds the mileage of water-mains (approximately 105 miles of sewers, 163.5 of water-mains). A city the size of Bridgeport cannot afford seventy-five miles of unsewered streets and still more in which the sewers are inadequate for the present demands upon them. The growth of the city is so rapid that the condition is becoming worse almost daily. There are, in round numbers, 180 miles of public streets, of which it is asserted that not more than forty per cent. have sewers which can meet the demands put upon them.

In the northern part of the city there are sections which are being rapidly developed where no sewer connection is possible at present. Cess-pools are being excavated in the yards in this section resulting in a net-work of pools which become filthy and foul unless properly cleansed. During the two months of the survey there were complaints from the residents in this part of the city because of the seepage from the cess-pools into nearby streams which became noisome and filthy. Worse conditions than those already confronting the city will shortly develop if the principle of building two-family houses and tenements in unsewered sections of the city is allowed to continue. The amount of waste from such buildings cannot be cared for in cess-pools without danger to the community when dwellings become frequent. Sewers should spread out into new sections so as to obviate the double expense, first of providing privately for the disposal of sewerage and later of connecting with the sewer system.

**Disposal of Ashes, Garbage and Other Refuse:** The city of Bridgeport provides for the collection of garbage. During the months of the investigation this problem seemed to be adequately met. It will doubtless be necessary to make more frequent collections during the warm weather. A more vigorous enforcement of the rules regarding the receptacles would have beneficial results. Such regulations have been in force elsewhere and Bridgeport is certainly as capable as other cities of its size of carrying out sanitary provisions. A metal can holding not more than forty quarts, tight, and fitted with a cover could be kept in the yard near the house without any bad results and would be far more convenient than cans kept



Garbage, ashes and old cans thrown into the yard from the rear porch. The ash bin was over-full and the yard wet and muddy

in the rear of the yards, especially during the winter months, when there is snow on the ground, or when the yards are muddy and wet. The practice of throwing garbage into the yards is, I believe, largely the result of the inconvenience of reaching the garbage receptacle. Poorly shod women often must tramp through snow and mud a distance of 30 feet and even further to reach the garbage barrel.

The problem of ash disposal is one which merits the attention of the city officials. At the present time the usual plan is to have a wooden bin built in the yard. In the case of tenement houses these bins are often huge affairs serving sixteen families and even more. When left uncovered the rain and snow falling upon the ashes seep through and then freeze, the contents of the bin forming a solid mass which can be removed only by the use of a pick. When the ashes are piled above the edge of the bin, much of the refuse is washed into the yard by heavy storms. The thrifty tenement dweller is careful about sifting her ashes. The bins are often so high that it is impossible for her to do her sifting over the bin so that the unsightly pile in front of the bin is increased by the ash dust from the sifting. This dust is blown about the yards, covering porches and railings with a fine white powder. One bad feature of the present method of ash disposal is the inevitable practice of mixing the garbage with the ashes. A short trip through any tenement district in the city during the late winter or early spring will reveal dozens of instances where orange skins and peelings are found in the bins or scattered about the yards as a result of the chickens and cats getting into the bins in search of food. At the best these ash bins are unsightly, disfiguring many of the yards even in good residence sections. When the spring comes there is great demand for the private collectors who frequently cannot attend to orders rapidly enough. Nor are they careful to clean up the overflow in the yard when they empty the bins.

The collection of ashes is a proper function of city government. It is far more economical than the private collections now in vogue. If properly arranged in connection with the collection of garbage; garbage collections being more frequent in summer and ash collections more frequent in winter; much economy of time and expense can be obtained.



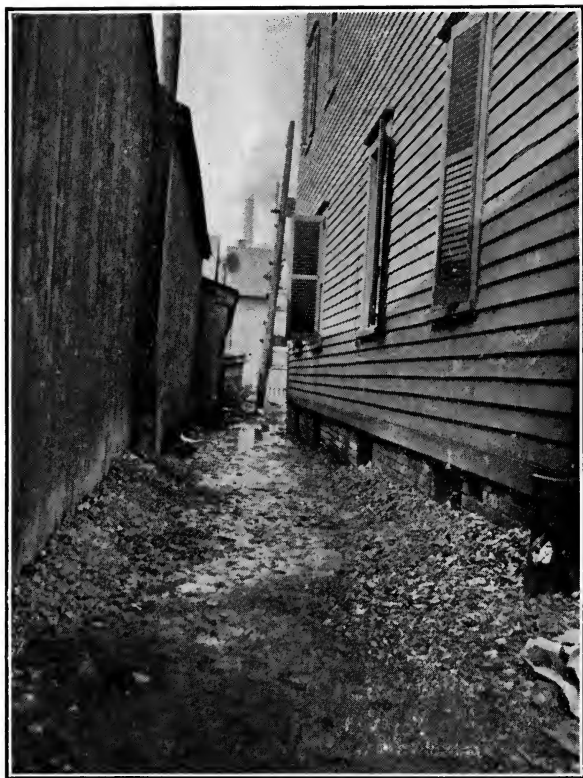
A broken ash bin at the rear of a tenement house



An even more difficult problem than the disposal of ashes is the disposal of such materials as tin cans and glass bottles. Such refuse is not very desirable for filling in purposes and if left about exposed, subjects children to the danger of bad cuts and sores resulting from broken glass and rusty metal. The failure of the city to provide for the proper disposal of this class of rubbish has resulted in most unsightly conditions of yards and dumps, and deprives the city of the valuable asset of a neat, tidy and prosperous appearance. In justice to all, the city should collect all sorts of refuse. At the present time a man who faithfully performs his duty in disposing of the waste material from his premises frequently suffers from his neighbors' neglect. Nor are cases unknown where yards are actually used as dumps by neighboring tenants for whom no suitable provision is made. Both justice and economy demand that the city should perform this duty.

**Drainage and Cleanliness of Yards:** Situated as Bridgeport is with creeks and streams in many parts of the city, there is of necessity much land which has been filled in. This work has frequently been done without any proper attention to grading. The yards, especially in the tenement districts, are dotted with small puddles and are ankle-deep in mud or slush much of the time. In some instances the yards remained in this condition continuously for weeks. The spaces between the sides of the houses and adjoining fences are rank with stagnant water. It is conditions such as these which foster epidemics and the spread of disease. When we consider the usual method of disposing of ashes in these yards the result can best be described as one vast mud-pie with bits of garbage as a decoration. That the condition is unnecessary is shown clearly by the fact that small houses adjacent have their yards graded and sodded so that there is rarely any standing water to complain of.

**Outbuildings:** The large yards so often found in the districts inspected lead quite naturally to the erection of outbuildings. In many instances these are small frame structures erected in an amateurish way for housing a few chickens. Occasionally there are stables in these rear yards and among these are some so large as to be a menace to the neighboring

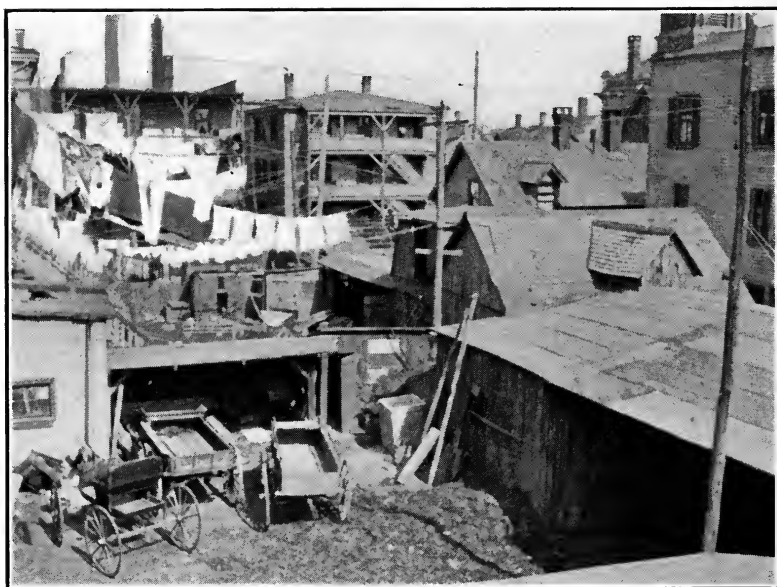


Narrow space between buildings, dirty and standing water.  
The condition continued for weeks

dwellings. Of other animals there was no evidence except an occasional goose or a few rabbits or pigeons, and in one instance a black billy-goat was bedded under the rear porch and during the daytime tethered in the yard by a long rope. He, together with the chickens in this yard, ate macaroni with true Italian relish, but the condition of the yard as a result of the large animal family was quite unsanitary.

In almost every instance where the cellar or basement is used for dwelling purposes, storage bins are erected in the yard for the use of the tenants. These bins are usually flimsy wooden shacks, and increase greatly the risk of fire in the district. The cellar is a better place for the storage of coal and wood than for dwellings for human beings, and by using it for its proper purpose these storage bins could be absolutely eliminated.

**Repair of Buildings:** Only a very few buildings were classified as being in bad repair. This classification includes only buildings unfit for human habitation because of leaking roofs, unsanitary plumbing, and broken walls and windows. Many buildings, however, were classified as being only in fair repair. Such buildings had broken plaster, small leaks in the plumbing (many of these were in the intake pipes in the cellar) and such a lack of paint that deterioration was resulting. Houses were considered in good repair if the roof was tight, plumbing in good condition, and walls, windows, and clapboards without a break. Lack of paint alone or a single break in the plaster where the doorknob continually hits against the wall are not sufficient to place a house in the rank of those in fair repair only, and due allowance was always made for repairs which were found well under way or for needed repairs in buildings quite evidently usually kept in excellent condition. A severe storm will often break windows and shutters, or an unexpected cold snap affect the plumbing to such an extent in these unheated frame buildings that their usual condition cannot be judged by a single day's inspection. For this reason conditions that seemed unusual at the time of the first visit were re-inspected after several weeks.



Large stable at the rear of a tenement house. Stable litter in the yard.  
This is a nuisance to the neighborhood

## CHAPTER V.

### NARROW STREETS, COURTS AND LANES.

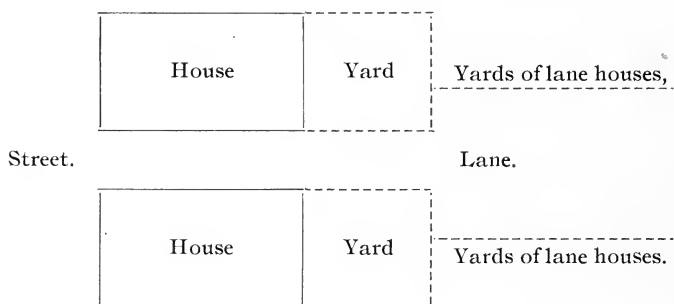
There are in Bridgeport a number of minor thoroughfares, some of them streets or lanes which are open at both ends to public highways, others are blind courts. Several of these were studied from the point of view of the paving, lighting, and the type of house. It was found that many were especially narrow at the entrances because the minor street was made from the side yards of the street houses. The open space back of the houses was then built upon, but the houses were placed back from the lane. The result of this method of development is that the courts are bottle-shaped with the neck of the bottle made by the houses on the main thoroughfares.

LIGHTING AND PAVING OF EIGHTEEN MINOR WAYS

	Paved across	Sidewalk	No pavement to dwellings	Total
Lighted within	4	5	2	11
Light at entrance only	1	4	0	5
No artificial light	2	0	0	2
Total	7	9	2	18

In the case of the streets open at both ends the narrowing of the way may occur at one end only. Some of these minor thoroughfares bear signs stating that they are private, others have no such notices, but most of them have been open to the public for years, so that in practice, if not in title, they have reverted to public ownership. Mr. Courtade says that there is an ordinance in effect which reads, "No street will be accepted by the council unless the width shall be at least fifty feet." There are, however, in some of these narrow ways lamp-posts and some of the streets are paved. One pavement for wagons and pedestrians was found a good arrangement if

graded to drain properly. Others are without any artificial lighting, either within the street or from a lamp placed on the public highway near the entrance. The type of house built on these streets varies from small detached cottages to blocks of frame tenements.



These narrow streets, courts, and lanes should be paved, well lighted, and policed by the city. It is in just such developments that the worst possible conditions arise, that gangsters congregate and petty crimes occur, unless there is proper supervision. If, however, proper precautions are taken these minor thoroughfares should become excellent places for the erection of small dwellings. The narrowness of the street will make its paving and maintenance less expensive than the wider streets of the city, and land values should be less than on the through streets. The type of house permitted in such places should depend upon the width and character of the open space. It is safe to say, however, that no tenement can safely be allowed except on the main thoroughfares, and that in most instances only one-family houses should be tolerated in the courts and lanes. Moreover these courts and lanes should usually be opened at both ends to the through streets and they should be without branches or bends so that every part of them may be in full view from the street entrances. Of course they should be lighted just as the streets are. Dark, hidden cul-de-sacs offer temptation for disorder and immorality. Some definite plan for the development of the over-deep lots in the city might well be provided for in the report of the City Plan Commission.

## CHAPTER VI.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

**Tenements:** The records of the building department show a steady increase in the number of tenements erected during the past five years. The total number of such buildings erected during the year April, 1913, to March 31st, 1914, was 176, housing 534 families. The greatest number of these tenements are frame buildings housing three families each. This kind of tenement is favored by the immigrant builder who borrows enough money to build such a house, heavily mortgaged. He then lives in one of the apartments himself and rents out the other two, paying the running expenses and something toward clearing the mortgage from the rents he collects. Many of the tenements which are being erected have large yards and courts which seem to bear out what I believe to be the present condition in Bridgeport, namely, that tenements are built in the belief that they save expense in cellars and roofs rather than because there is pressure toward land over-crowding. The amount of land surrounding many of the tenements is quite sufficient for the erection of two or three small dwellings if the land were properly developed, but the deep lots cannot be used to advantage in the erection of small houses. It would be necessary to develop the property either as a court or to cut through additional minor streets to furnish a right-of-way for the houses on the tail end of the lots. The tendency to build tenements is seen even in the outskirts of Bridgeport where the old farms are being broken up into building lots. The owners have been weaned away from the one-family house idea by their lives in the tenement districts of the city and move into the open country hampered by false standards of American living. Some of these tenements are being built where the streets are not yet cut through and where there is no possibility of sewer connection. The first building of this character does not impress the casual

observer as being especially objectionable. Plumbing arrangements are installed and are connected with a cesspool which under the law must be twenty feet at least from the dwelling. But when whole sections are developed in this way the yards become a net-work of cesspools and conditions become bad indeed unless the supervision is thorough and constant.

Even if every tenement in the city were light and airy, equipped with modern sanitary conveniences and safeguarded from fire, the tenements of Bridgeport would menace her future citizenship. The congregate life in these multiple dwellings is replete with moral dangers which threaten to undermine our national life. There is a relaxing of personal ideals of decency, and a strain on the integrity of the family which bodes ill for the future of the Republic.

**Two-Family Houses:** The two-family house is built in larger numbers than the tenement house; 206 such dwellings have been erected in the last fiscal year. But a comparison of the **number of families** housed in such dwellings with the number housed in tenements is most unfavorable, for these 206 two-family houses supply apartments for only 412 families, compared with the more than 500 families housed in new tenements. The usual plan of these two-family houses is rather good. There are separate entrances at the front, the first floor furnishing an apartment of five rooms and a bath with an additional room in the attic, reached by the back stairs. The second floor has the same arrangement but has two rooms on the third floor, reached by private stairs, direct from the apartment. The bath-room is situated between the two bed-rooms and opens off a small hall which has doors to both bed-rooms and also to the kitchen. The stairs in the rear are used by both families for reaching the cellar and the open attic. While not furnishing the privacy of a one-family house, these two-family houses are far superior to any tenement. The lack of variety in this plan, however, makes it necessary for a family to accommodate themselves to the same number of rooms without regard to whether the family consists of two people or ten. There is another plan, which is found more especially in the less expensive houses, where





A narrow court with blocks of frame tenement houses

the apartments have four rooms each, with or without additional rooms in the attic. The bath in this case opens off the rear hall and although doors are provided to close this hall from the rest of the house, it is the only means for reaching the attic and cellar, so that the privacy of each family is at times invaded by the other.

**One-Family Houses:** During the last year only 113 one-family houses have been erected in the city, the number of families housed being, of course, the same. Bridgeport may compare fairly well with other cities of its size in New England in the housing of its people, but it falls far below such a city as Grand Rapids, Michigan, which, though larger, has a very much greater percentage of one-family houses in proportion to its population. Some means should be taken in Bridgeport to encourage the erection of the one-family house by the immigrant who is intending to build. If the tenement type of dwelling could be prohibited on unsewered streets—as it should be for sanitary reasons if no other—and any but one-family houses on lots where the streets are not yet opened, there might well develop in certain sections large areas occupied exclusively by one and two-family houses. Once tenements invade a street, it is killed as a small house residence neighborhood.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT CAN BE ACCOMMODATED IN NEW DWELLINGS AND BUILDINGS CONVERTED TO DWELLINGS DURING PAST FIVE YEARS.\*

	1909-1910	1910-1911	1911-1912	1912-1913	1913-1914	Total No. of families
No. of families in 1-family houses...	100	87	127	145	113	572
No. of families in 2-family houses...	430	410	436	356	412	2044
No. of families in tenement houses..	266	406	523	536	534	2265
Total	796	903	1086	1037	1059	4881

\* The year is reckoned from April 1.

**Outlying Sections:** The development of small house districts need not necessarily be within the city limits. It is often far wiser for the man of small means to buy property

just over the city line and then bear the additional expense of grading, sewer extensions, and lighting at a later date when the city incorporates the section where he has built. At Villa Park there are many small houses built by working men, some of whom walk to the nearest car-line, and others walk the entire distance to their work if the weather is at all favorable. Bicycles are used by many of the men in Bridgeport as a means of reaching their work, some of the factories having places for as many as one hundred wheels. A few years ago the section of the city lying between North Main Street and Madison Avenue was almost untouched. Lots which sold less than five years ago for \$300.00 to \$350.00 are now bringing twice that amount according to people who purchased a few years ago. Many of the houses that have been built in this section are of a good type but toward Madison Avenue there are tenements and two-family houses standing here and there on little rising knolls many feet away from the next dwelling. Occasionally one sees a house which, though storm-proof and sanitary, is clearly only the beginning for a larger dwelling. It is interesting to talk to the women in these homes, which are almost invariably built on property bought on the weekly or monthly payment plan. Invariably it seems to be the woman of the family who has the courage to undertake the long, weary process of purchasing a home in this way. Occasionally a family is overtaken by misfortune and must give up what they have worked for so industriously. Others, however, are more fortunate, some of them selling their original plots at an advance and moving out further where the money thus gained puts them in a better position to face the future with a smaller debt on the new purchase.



## CHAPTER VII.

### SUMMARY.

**Good Conditions:** At the head of the list of good conditions in Bridgeport is the water supply. It is excellent in quality, ample in quantity, and convenient in location. A city which has so well solved one of the most important problems connected with the housing situation, can certainly face the future with hope that other factors in the problem will reach as happy a solution. Here and there old wells are still in use as would be expected in a city which has grown so rapidly as Bridgeport, where there are still standing many houses which but a few years ago were in the country outside the city limits. Occasionally there are extreme instances of lack of water facilities. Such a case was recently reported to the Board of Health where 21 families depended on 2 polluted wells for their entire water supply. But such neglected conditions are rare and the plentiful supply of good water makes it possible to do away with the old wells.

A second good condition in the city is the existence of but few dwellings with dark rooms. Hardly a day passes that the value of light and air and sunshine from the point of view of health and efficiency is not brought home to the community in the daily papers. That Bridgeport is almost free from rooms which are without direct light is cause for congratulation. There are some instances in the city of this evil; blocks of buildings which are rank with the health-destroying, unlighted rooms. The dark-room evil is one almost impossible to cure, though conditions may be somewhat bettered by cutting large windows into adjoining rooms. Fortunately the further spread of the evil in tenement houses is prevented by state law, and should be immediately prohibited in other dwellings by local ordinance.

Inextricably bound up with the dark-room problem is the question of ample yards and courts. Building with ade-

quate spaces at the sides and rear of the dwellings is the rule in Bridgeport today. It is a civic duty to perpetuate this practice. The breaking down of this good building habit will result in conditions which will burden the community with the support of the inefficient and diseased who are bred in the slums of the city. Already there are in Bridgeport small groups of buildings so crowded together that they foretell bad conditions that will result unless definite precautions are taken to prevent over-crowding of the lots. Fortunately for Bridgeport, the factories are not centered in the heart of the city, but many of them are built well out from the main streets. This does away with many of the difficulties of transportation which arise when all the activities of the city are grouped together. It also makes it much more feasible for the workers in any one factory to live comparatively near their place of employment. The location of factories is largely a question of city planning, but this is one of the points where city planning and housing meet.

The position of the city is such that it can grow in all directions except towards the south. It is growing rapidly and there is ample room for it to spread out. The old farms are being converted into building lots. All that is needed to develop the property outside the city limits and at the extreme limits of the present city are adequate transportation facilities. With a city so fortunately situated in regard to vacant spaces, there is no reason why Bridgeport should not grow to be a city of many times its present population, and with an ever-increasing proportion of the population living in small houses rather than in the huge, multiple dwellings which are threatening to become the accepted dwelling for the man of small means.

**Bad Conditions:** The general acceptance of the tenement house as the dwelling for those who must pay \$10.00 or less for rent is the most unpromising aspect of the Bridgeport situation. In such dwellings are gathered the immigrant population, unaccustomed to our living conditions, unfamiliar with the use of many of our sanitary conveniences; frequently lacking all knowledge of city life. They reach us eager to acquire American ideas and to accept our ideals, instead we

herd them in barrack dwellings, apart from the native born, and allow them to live as no efficient American would. Already we are reaping what we have sown. In some of the larger cities even the well-to-do are being forced into tenement dwellings, for when the multiple dwelling has driven out the small house there is no choice. Bridgeport itself is not free from the results of having put before the foreigner a bad model which he has copied and is now forcing on the native born. The erection of tenements in the outlying sections of the city, by the immigrant, shows all too clearly that the tenement idea of life has become the ideal of many.

Another bad feature of the housing conditions in Bridgeport is the rear house. This type of dwelling is objectionable whether it is a tenement or not. It is usually poorly lighted and ventilated, frequently in need of paint and repairs, and always houses the less efficient elements of the population because of the lower rents. Public opinion is with most of us a powerful incentive for bringing out the best that is in us. It is an incentive which is especially needed by the weak and inefficient who lose their initiative and self-respect easily. Such people quickly reflect their environment and their standards of living deteriorate rapidly unless subjected to the constant scrutiny of their neighbors and the community. For psychological reasons, if no other, the rear dwelling should be prevented. The rear house is due to a great extent to the city plan or rather to the lack of such a plan. Where lots are so deep that they cannot be developed economically for a single house, the usual recourse is to the erection of additional houses at the rear of the lot. Under the present state law no tenement may be erected on the rear of a lot on which there is already one tenement, unless there is a yard thirty feet wide between the two, and all tenements must have rear yards of ample depth. This provision prohibits the erection of rear tenements on almost all lots, but it in no way affects the erection of non-tenement dwellings. A local ordinance designed to stop the evil in all dwellings was passed in 1910. This or a similar ordinance framed to meet the legal objections to the present one, should be enforced impartially.

In striking contrast to the very good water facilities are the toilet arrangements in tenement houses. The unlighted

toilet compartment is the rule rather than the exception. A single fixture is frequently made to serve two families and there is no possibility of either family or individual privacy in the use of the convenience. It cannot be strongly enough urged that privacy, decency, and morality require that each family should have the use of a water-closet accessible directly from the apartment without passing through any public part of a dwelling.

The lack of city collection of ashes is one of the most noticeable, if not one of the most unwholesome evidences of civic neglect. Such collection is imperative and is necessary for the entire population. The neglect of this obvious duty results in an unsightly, uncleanly condition of the yards and vacant spaces for which there is no excuse. Other cities not one-third as large as Bridgeport, (i. e., Mt. Vernon and Ithaca, New York), have solved the problem of city collection of all kinds of waste, and some have converted yards and vacant lots into gardens which replace the usual dreary dump. The use of vacant spaces as gardens is an economic solution of the vacant lot problem which prevents the use of such spaces for unsightly purposes and at the same time provides the thrifty immigrant with a chance to raise the small vegetables which so many of our foreign-born fellow-citizens know well how to bring to perfection.

There has been so much agitation concerning the extension of sewers in Bridgeport that the present bad conditions need be referred to only in a general way. As all who read the daily papers know, there are sections of the city which are absolutely without sewer connection or possibility of making any such connection, and there are other parts of the city where the present sewers are inadequate for their present use, so that it is inadvisable to connect additional sewers to these mains. No large city can maintain itself as a healthy community unless proper sewers are provided. In scattered communities cess-pools are permissible but in a city the size of Bridgeport the use of cess-pools is bound to cause such conditions as were recently reported from the North End, and which threaten the community with disease. Certainly no





A typical ash bin in the yard of a Bridgeport tenement house  
in the early spring

tenement or two-family house should be permitted in the parts of the city which are without sewer connection.

**The Outlook:** The housing situation in Bridgeport is one which merits immediate attention. With conditions existing and threatening that should be cured and prevented and many good conditions which should be safeguarded and encouraged lest they be lost to the Bridgeport of the future, the time is ripe for definite action. Many of the bad conditions can be remedied; windows may be cut into dark rooms; dark toilet compartments can be lighted or replaced by compartments with outside windows and provision for privacy. There are already efforts being made to improve the present situation in regard to sanitary sewers. In addition to this work of alleviating bad conditions there is the greater work of prevention. It is at this point that the problem becomes most hopeful. The present tenement house law has already checked some bad tendencies and local ordinances and wise inspection are preventing the construction of dark rooms in the smaller dwellings. But a constructive policy, not content with maintaining the present standards, but determined to provide much better conditions must be inaugurated.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RECOMMENDATIONS.

1 There is in Bridgeport a great need for certain activities usually initiated by private societies. A practical visiting housekeeper could do much to improve conditions in the homes of those who do not know our American standards of living and are unfamiliar with the conveniences provided in modern city dwellings.

2 An organized effort to transform yards and vacant lots into gardens would give many a chance for wholesome recreation and would help to abolish the dreary dumps.

3 The dearth of good small houses in Bridgeport indicates that there is a field for a building company which will construct such houses and at the same time offer a fair return on all money invested in the undertaking. Such companies have been organized in several cities and small sanitary dwellings have been erected. The work of these other cities should be studied but not slavishly followed. In no two cities is the problem exactly the same and Bridgeport must solve her own difficulties.

4 The following recommendations can be realized only through the local government. A complete record of vaults and cess-pools should be made as a basis for thorough, periodic inspections, which are necessary until sewer connections are substituted for these primitive methods of disposal.

5 City collection of ashes and rubbish has already been urged as the only effective method of making the city sweet and clean.

6 The extension of the sewers is a necessity.

7 Additional inspectors are needed to carry out the provisions of the "Act Concerning Sanitary Conditions in Tenement, Lodging and Boarding Houses." It is impossible to say how many inspectors are needed for this work as no one knows the number of houses in the city coming under the provisions of the act. Three men added to the present force of the board of health and giving all their time to the work, is a conservative estimate.

8 A city Housing Code is needed to supplement the state law and to extend necessary protection to 1- and 2-family houses. Such codes have been passed in Columbus, Duluth and Grand Rapids. Mr. Veiller's Model Housing Law is an excellent guide in drafting such an ordinance as it contains the various forms in which provisions for good housing have been tried out with success. The state law needs strengthening as follows:

In sections 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 which deal with the minimum dimensions of yards and courts the open spaces should be increased from two to four feet so as to keep conditions as good throughout the city as they are now in most cases.

Section 19 should be amended so that all water closet compartments must have a window to the street, yard or court. The practice of allowing shaft windows has been thoroughly tried out and found wanting. In addition all such compartments in tenement houses should have water proof floors and base boards.



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